

India must look beyond cereals to find diverse nutritional sources, says expert

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Soumya Swaminathan, chairperson, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), and former Chief Scientist at the World Health Organisation (WHO), on Thursday said that India needs to look beyond a cereal-centric approach to identify diverse nutritional sources for ensuring food and nutritional security.

She was inaugurating a workshop on 'Societal Connect: Empowering Agri-Enterprises - Bridging Science, Sustainability and Society' organised by the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST). The problem, she said, lay in the poor dietary diversity of Indians.

'Not so nutritious'

"We have to look at sources of nutrition beyond the ce-

reals. If you look at the nutritional profile of Indians, we are not doing very well. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation, 40% of Indians cannot afford a nutritious diet. National Institute of Nutrition data also tell us that people are not eating a nutritious diet as defined by them," she said.

Dr. Swaminathan observed that India was not doing well in the area of value addition. "We have a

lot of raw material. We send that raw material to another country like Thailand or Vietnam who do the value addition. Then the value goes up by 10% or 20% and then the profit is made by that country," she said.

C. Anandharamakrishnan, Director, CSIR-NIIST, said India must increase its agricultural and food product exports through value addition, innovation, and entrepreneurship.